Studii și Articole

The doctrine of knowledge and the cognitive powers in Isaac of Niniveh

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Abstract: *One of the most important themes in Isaac of Niniveh is the doctrine of divine knowledge. His all ascetic endeavor aims to experience the presence of God, described as divine knowledge, vision, or perception. In order to picture this process Isaac makes an interesting synthesis between Evagrius, Theodore of Mopsuestia and John the Solitary (eventually also Pseudo Macarius). And by doing this, he involves the “powers” of the soul that make human capable of knowing, seeing and feeling God. This analysis becomes more interesting if one places it within the East Syriac Christology of the 7-8th century and the various debates between an academic theology (represented by schools and, occasionally, by the higher clergy) and the monastic charismatic theology. The question of this research refers to the type of knowledge the ascetic is able to experience and the structure of the human that stands behind it, in the frame of the East Syriac anthropology.*

Keywords: *Isaac of Niniveh, knowledge, vision, perception, cognitive powers, East Syriac anthropology*

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The process of knowledge is possible, according to the spiritual Christian tradition, due to revelation, on the one hand, and to an anthropological structure able to communicate with the divinity, on the other hand. This second factor is located in what the philosophical terminology calls “noetic part” of the soul. Specifically, in the Syriac tradition, one speaks about “powers” (ܩܘܬܐ), “parts” (ܚܫܐ), or energies (ἐνέργεια), described as cognitive (γνωστικά), the last two terms borrowed from Greek terminology.

If we are to give a definition of what “power” means, I will refer to Pseudo-Michael the Interpreter, who identifies an ontological connection between power and nature. He argues that this term becomes a technical concept to express the generative condition of the acts (ܚܫܐ) and properties (ܩܘܬܐ/ܩܘܬܐ), intrinsic and connatural: “La puissance est ce qui est dit de la nature et avec la nature, et par rapport à l’individu de la nature, et c’est comme la chaleur pour le feu et la rationalité pour l’ange”¹. On the evolution of the term in the Syriac theological thinking, Vittorio Berti has published an important study last year, dedicated at large to the East Syriac anthropology regarding the problem of death². To contextualize the discussion around the cognitive powers in Isaac’s perspective, I will synthetically dwell on the anthropological terminology evolution and, in particular, on the taxonomies developed at some important writers, as listed by the Italian researcher, and their philosophical sources.

Anthropological taxonomies in the Syriac tradition

Ephrem the Syrian is the first representative author who deals with this issue. While using an intellectual terminology, he speaks about four powers, described as the noetic part of the soul: thinking³,

¹ Ps.-Michaël l’Interprète, Cf. G. Furlani, “ ‘Il libro delle definizioni e divisioni’ di Michele l’Interprete”, *Memorie delle Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche* 6 (1926), 2, p. 1-194, here p. 64, 118.

² *L’au-delà de l’âme et l’en-deça du corps. Morceaux d’anthropologie chrétienne de la mort dans l’église syro-orientale*, Paradosis 57, Paris, 2014.

³ ܩܘܬܐ; V. Berti – “entendement” (*L’au-delà de l’âme*, p. 76).

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mind⁴, thought⁵, and intellect⁶. As a trace of stoicism, Ephraim also speaks about seven senses (the classic five and the language and generation sense)⁷.

A second author, whose traces go back to the Syriac tradition, is Pseudo-Macarius. He interprets Ezekiel's vision in an anthropological key. The four appearances in his book, first chapter, symbolize the noblest λογισμοί⁸ of the soul: will⁹, conscience¹⁰, intellect¹¹ and charity¹². Instead of energy (correlated only with the last power), he uses the term "dynamis".

John the Solitary, the first author to provide a synthesis of the Syriac ascetic theology, involves mostly the term "passion" (ܥܠܡܐ) that, as Berti argues¹³, presumes a connection between the soul's impulses and the corporal actions. In his work, "Dialogue on the Soul"¹⁴, he lists three passions: discernment¹⁵, lust¹⁶, irascibility¹⁷, reflecting Plato's three parts of the soul and, consequently, analyzing their negative development, he identifies the sources in: human's nature, in the evil that is mixed with the nature, in the works of the devils and even in the soul¹⁸.

⁴ ܥܠܡܐ; V. Berti – "connaissance".

⁵ ܥܠܡܐ.

⁶ ܥܠܡܐ; See the index of Syriac words E. Beck, *Ephräm des Syrers Psychologie und Erkenntnislehre*, CSCO 419/ 58, 1980, pp. 183-184.

⁷ E. Beck, *Ephräm des Syrers Psychologie*, pp. 1-20.

⁸ Translated as characteristics, affections or passions.

⁹ Θέλημα.

¹⁰ Συνείδεισις.

¹¹ Νοῦς.

¹² Ἀγαπητικὴ δύναμις; Ps.-Macaire, *Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios*, ed. by H. Dörries, Patristische Texte und Studien 4, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1964 pp., 2-3; *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, trad. by G. A. Maloney, Paulist Press, Manwah N.J., 1992, p. 36.

¹³ *L'au-delà de l'âme*, p. 78.

¹⁴ *Dialogue sur l'âme l'âme e les passions des hommes* 13-4, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, Roma, 1939, pp. 26-27 (48-49).

¹⁵ ܥܠܡܐ.

¹⁶ ܥܠܡܐ.

¹⁷ ܥܠܡܐ; He adds also the "intellective power" (ܥܠܡܐ ܥܠܡܐ).

¹⁸ *Dialogue sur l'âme*, pp. 39-40 (60) ; Vittorio Berti argues that John the Solitary lists here the opinions spread in his time on the source of passions, synthetized in four

Jacob of Sarug, a representative theologian of the School of Edessa in northern Syria, speaks about five senses (knowledge¹⁹, intellection²⁰, discernment²¹, intellect²², mind²³)-²⁴, in the line of Ephrem the Syrian, and eight beauties (ܬܝܒܝܬ) of the soul (intellect²⁵, wisdom²⁶, illumination²⁷, sublime mind²⁸, impulses full of discernment²⁹, speech³⁰, voice³¹ and spiritual thoughts³²)³³. The variability of the terminology in his thinking demonstrates that there was no stable anthropological-psychological pattern during the fifth-sixth century.

Using a Platonist pattern and following Evagrius³⁴, some other authors speak about the three parts of the soul: rationality, will and irascibility. Contemporary with Jacob of Sarug, Philoxenus of Mabboug evokes the three divisions of the soul and the way they manifest: the rationality³⁵ of the intellect has its very aim to achieve knowledge in creation and of God Himself, the desire³⁶ longs for the

general lines: anthropological vision, dualistic vision, demonological vision and psychological vision (*L'au-delà de l'âme*, p. 80).

¹⁹ ܬܝܒܝܬ.

²⁰ ܬܝܒܝܬ.

²¹ ܬܝܒܝܬ.

²² ܬܝܒܝܬ.

²³ ܬܝܒܝܬ.

²⁴ Jacob of Sarug, *Homiliae Selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, ed. by P. Bedjan, vol. I-II, IV, Otto Harrassowitz, Paris, Leipzig, 1905, 1906, 1908, II, 35, p. 77.

²⁵ ܬܝܒܝܬ.

²⁶ ܬܝܒܝܬ.

²⁷ ܬܝܒܝܬ.

²⁸ ܬܝܒܝܬ.

²⁹ ܬܝܒܝܬ.

³⁰ ܬܝܒܝܬ.

³¹ ܬܝܒܝܬ.

³² ܬܝܒܝܬ.

³³ *Homiliae Selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis*, I, 30, pp. 687-688.

³⁴ *Praktikos*, Antione et Claire Guillaumont (ed.), *Evagre le Pontique: Traité pratique ou le moine II*, SC 171, Paris, 1971, pp. 683-684.

³⁵ ܬܝܒܝܬ.

³⁶ ܬܝܒܝܬ.

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unification with spiritual things and the irascibility³⁷ struggles against passions³⁸.

Dadisho Qatraya, a contemporary monastic author with Isaac of Niniveh, changes the Evagrian terminology of “parts” with the Aristotelian term cognitive³⁹ “powers” and lists the same three energies: desire⁴⁰, irascibility⁴¹ and mind⁴² and their active aim, in the same manner as Philoxenus.

Berti shows in his study that Jacob of Edessa⁴³ is the first Syriac author who seems to make a clear synthesis between the Aristotelian tradition and the Platonist legacy, when he mentions the existence of “powers” of animation (nutritive and augmentative⁴⁴, sensitive and impulsive⁴⁵, rational and of decision⁴⁶) and “powers” of the soul⁴⁷ (irascibility⁴⁸, desire⁴⁹ and rational thought⁵⁰), as the first category represents the former philosophical thinking, while the second, the latter philosophical tradition⁵¹.

³⁷ ܠܚܝܫܘܬܐ.

³⁸ *La lettre à Patricius de Philoxène de Mabboug*, ed. and transl. By R. Lavenant, *Patrologia Orientalis* 30.5, Paris, 1963, pp. 782-783 (62-63); see the same division at Ahudemme, bishop of Nisibis, cf. G. Furlani, “La psicologia di Ahudhemme”, *Atti della Reale Accademia delle Scienze di Torino: Classe delle Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche*, 61 (1926), p. 844.

³⁹ ܠܥܝܢܐ.

⁴⁰ ܠܚܝܫܘܬܐ.

⁴¹ ܠܚܝܫܘܬܐ.

⁴² ܠܡܝܢܐ.

⁴³ *Iacobi Edesseni Hexameron seu in Opus creationis libri septem Hexaméron*, ed. and transl. by A. Vaschalde, CSCO 92/44; 97/ 48, 1928, 1932, pp. 323-324 (275-276).

⁴⁴ ܠܥܝܢܐ ܠܥܝܢܐ.

⁴⁵ ܠܥܝܢܐ ܠܥܝܢܐ.

⁴⁶ ܠܥܝܢܐ ܠܥܝܢܐ.

⁴⁷ Appetitive.

⁴⁸ ܠܚܝܫܘܬܐ/ θυμός.

⁴⁹ ܠܚܝܫܘܬܐ/ ἐπιθυμία.

⁵⁰ ܠܚܝܫܘܬܐ ܠܚܝܫܘܬܐ/ βούλησις.

⁵¹ Vittorio Berti evokes a pattern that tries to synthesize the two mentioned philosophers identified at some different Greek authors as Ammonius (*In Aristotelis Librum de Interpretatione*, 4), David (*Prolegomena*, 79.6), Olympiodorus (*In Platonis Gorgiam*, 12.3), Meletius (*De Natura Hominis*, 23.18; 149.27): five cognitive powers (intellect/

It is not difficult to identify the presence of this synthesis at some well-known Syriac authors. The great translator Sergius of Resh'aina mentions the three vital powers, but instead of desire he speaks about will⁵². Barhadbshaba, professor of Nisibis, also mentions the cognitive powers (intellect⁵³, intelligence⁵⁴ and thinking⁵⁵)⁵⁶ besides the appetitive powers. What is new and interesting refers to the fact that, in addition to the three appetitive powers, he lists the mind⁵⁷ that dominates the others.

Before referring to Isaac's vision, I will mention three other important writers dealing with this issue. One of them is Simon Taibuteh, who seems to have known Isaac. He speaks about the existence of two active powers – rationality⁵⁸ and vitality⁵⁹. The first one is specific to the rational beings and becomes manifested by the means of mind⁶⁰, intellect⁶¹, thinking⁶², thoughts⁶³ and discernment⁶⁴, while the second power corresponds to both the rational and the non-rational beings and is actualized in desire and irascibility⁶⁵.

νοῦς; thinking/ διάνοια; opinion/ δόξα; imagination/ φαντασία; perception/ αἴσθησις) and three vital powers (irascibility/ θυμός; desire/ ἐπιθυμία; will/ βούλησις), sometimes also added the free choice (προαίρεσις). For details see V. Berti, *L'au-delà de l'âme*, pp. 88-90.

⁵² ܡܠܟܐ; cf. G. Fiori, "L'épitomé syriaque du traité *Sur les causes du tout d'Alexandre d'Aphrodise* attribué à Serge d'Reš'ayna", *Le Muséon*, 123 (2010), 1-2, p. 127-158, here 130.

⁵³ ܡܠܟܐ.

⁵⁴ ܡܠܟܐܝܬܐ.

⁵⁵ ܡܠܟܐܝܬܐ.

⁵⁶ Cf. Mar Barhadbšabba 'Arbaya, évêque de Halwan (VII^e siècle). *Cause de la fondation des écoles*, ed. by A. Scher, *Patrologia Orientalis* 4.4, Paris, 1908, p. 341 (27).

⁵⁷ ܡܠܟܐ.

⁵⁸ ܡܠܟܐܝܬܐ.

⁵⁹ ܡܠܟܐܝܬܐ.

⁶⁰ ܡܠܟܐ.

⁶¹ ܡܠܟܐ.

⁶² ܡܠܟܐ.

⁶³ ܡܠܟܐܝܬܐ.

⁶⁴ ܡܠܟܐܝܬܐ.

⁶⁵ *Woodbroock Studies: Christian Documents in Syriac, Arabic and Garshuni Edited and Translated with a Critical Apparatus*, vol. VII: *Early Christian Mystics*, ed. and

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Another interesting author, mentioned by Vittorio Berti in the aforementioned study, Theodore Bar Koni (8th century), develops an entire system kin to Patriarch Timothy's, as I will show later on. Firstly, he attributes four primary powers to the body, formed out of the mixture of four primordial elements: warmth, cold, humidity and dryness. Next to these powers, he adds four characteristics that support the function of the organism – attraction, repulsion, conjunction and disjunction, while mentioning also the desire and the vitality. These generate five operations: irascibility⁶⁶, desire⁶⁷, discernment⁶⁸, sensitiveness⁶⁹ and concupiscence⁷⁰. He also identifies the anatomic places where these five operations take place: curiously, sensitiveness in the brain, discernment in the heart, desire in the stomach, irascibility in the liver and concupiscence in the kidneys. Finally, he divides the souls' powers into two, and he associates vitality with irascibility and desire, while rationality with will and free choice. The latter one works under four operations: intellect⁷¹, mind⁷², thinking⁷³ and intelligence⁷⁴. As juxtaposing the medical science of his time (connected to the body) with philosophical preoccupation, Theodore speaks about powers and operations of both body and soul⁷⁵.

transl. by A. Mingana, Cambridge, 1934, p. 1-69, 280-321, here 49, 308; *Simone di Taibuteh. Violenza e grazia: la coltura del cuore*, transl. P. Bettolo, Collana di testi patristici 102, Città Nuova, Roma 1992; He changes “will” with “desire”, then introduces “mind” among the rational actions. Then also he changes “intelligence” (ܠܚܝܬܐ) with “thinking”.

⁶⁶ ܠܝܪܥܝܬܐ.

⁶⁷ ܠܕܝܬܐ.

⁶⁸ ܠܕܝܠܥܝܬܐ.

⁶⁹ ܠܕܝܠܥܝܬܐ.

⁷⁰ ܠܕܝܠܥܝܬܐ.

⁷¹ ܠܕܝܠܥܝܬܐ.

⁷² ܠܕܝܠܥܝܬܐ.

⁷³ ܠܕܝܠܥܝܬܐ.

⁷⁴ ܠܕܝܠܥܝܬܐ.

⁷⁵ *Liber Scholiorum*, ed. by A. Scher, CSCO 55/ 19, 1910; trad. *Livre de Scolies (Recension de Séert). I mimrè I-V*, transl. by R. Hespel and E. Draguet, CSCO 432/ 188, 1982, p. 22 (67).

Finally, not independently of Isaac's context and theological vision, I will dwell at short on the anthropological perspective of Patriarch Timothy I, within the theological dispute around the divine vision and the condemnation of the mystics in 787. Using mostly a Theodorian pattern⁷⁶, he defines the soul as "an intelligent, vivand, rational, mobile, immortal, invisible nature, created in the body by the divine will for the fulfilment of the body and to be eternally indissoluble in the Holy Spirit"⁷⁷. The soul, in his perspective, does not own the body, but is part of the natural and hypostatic composition of the human. Consequently, body and soul together work for the constitution of the human's natural order. The intellect, as cognitive instrument for created things, is interpreted by the mystics as the highest part of the soul, as well as, occasionally, something qualitatively different, for it is capable of seeing and becoming the place of God. But for Timothy, it is simply something that proceeds out of the soul. He uses a comparison so as to better explain the relation with the soul – the intellect and the word proceed from the soul as the rays and the warmth proceed from the sun⁷⁸. Similarly, he suggests a second comparison, this time using a Trinitarian language; the soul (ܐܢܝܡܐ) is assimilated with the Father, the word (ܠܘܓܐ) with the Son and the intellect (ܡܝܢܬܐ) proceeds as the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. What is interesting here refers to the fact that intellect is the expression of the entire soul and not only of a part of it.

Going further in his psychological-cognitive analysis, he argues the existence of four, occasionally, five, powers of the soul: rationality⁷⁹, irascibility⁸⁰, concupiscence⁸¹, will⁸². One pair pertains to

⁷⁶ See Vittorio Berti, "Le débat sur la vision de Dieu et la condamnation des mystiques par Timothée 1^{er}: la perspective du patriarche", in Alain Desreumax, *Les mystiques syriaques*, Paris, p. 162.

⁷⁷ Timothée, *Timothei Patriarchae Epistulae I*, ed. Oscar Brown, Paris, Leipzig, 1914 (1915), CSCO 74/30; 73/31, p. 44 (27).

⁷⁸ Cf. Martin Heimgartner, *Timotheos I., Ostsyrischer Patriarch, Disputation mit dem Kalifen Al-Mahdi*, Louvain, 2011, CSCO 631-632/ 244-245, p. 23-24 (22-23).

⁷⁹ ܐܢܬܠܐܠܐܢܐ.

⁸⁰ ܐܚܝܠܐܢܐ.

⁸¹ ܐܚܝܠܐܢܐ.

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the nature of the soul (rationality and will), while the second pair (irascibility and concupiscence) are assigned to the soul by its union with the body. Those which belong to the very soul are permanent, but the second pair ceases to exist the moment the body dies. All faculties have a double dimension – powers and act. Therefore, the first couple (pair) persists as power after the death of the body, while the second disappears entirely (power and act). At this point, the fifth power called vitality⁸³ or movement, which maintains its existence in both forms even after the migration of the soul⁸⁴. After this decisive moment, one speaks about the soul's repose, described as an unconscious presence. The patriarch clearly asserts that there is no knowledge and vision out of the body. After resurrection, the cognitive powers regain the second dimension of their existence – the act, and so the human will be able to experience intellection and vision. The Patriarch's anthropological theory on the cognitive powers depends completely on the hypostatic composition⁸⁵.

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We now turn to Isaac, who seems to have a clearer perception of the cognitive powers of the soul. In the second collection, in the third centuria, he lists five powers and the way they work in the cognitive process. I will quote the fragment entirely:

Cinque sone le potenze dell'anima, che l'anima dotata di ragione possiede nell'essenza congiunta, cioè il desiderio naturale⁸⁶ - dico (quello) dell'anima-; la potenza irascibile⁸⁷, sua ausilaria – il furore infatti è naturalmente ordinato a muoversi dopo il desiderio -; il moto della vitalità⁸⁸, che freme

⁸² ܬܠܬܐ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ.

⁸³ ܬܠܬܐ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ.

⁸⁴ Timothée, *Timothei Patriarchae Epistulae I*, pp. 50-52 (32).

⁸⁵ Vittorio Berti, *Le débat sur la vision de Dieu*, p. 67-68.

⁸⁶ ܬܠܬܐ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ.

⁸⁷ ܬܠܬܐ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ.

⁸⁸ ܬܠܬܐ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ.

in lei senza quiete; la razionalità semplice⁸⁹ e la razionalità composta⁹⁰. Due delle cinque potenze dell'anima cessano con la sua separazione dal corpo in una distinzione perfetta: sono la potenza irascibile e la razionalità composta. Nessuna di loro è infatti utile alla condotta futura: lì non v'è alcunché che la voce proclami, né alcuna opposizione alle cose buone contro cui sia d'utilità lo zelo. Altre due di loro, ancora, sono custodite senza fremito fino al tempo successivo alla resurrezione, cioè fino all'uso del mondo futuro. Toutto l'uso della condotta che è nei cieli risiede infatti in esse: una è la razionalità semplice, che è l'intelletto gnostico⁹¹ in cui (l'anima) è mossa nella contemplazione⁹² di quell'Essenza che è tutto il fine del regno dei cieli ed entro il cui stupore⁹³ è serbato l'intelletto di tutti gli esseri dotati di ragione, primi e ultimi; (l'altra è) il desiderio della sua natura⁹⁴, da cui è mosso il piacere per la grande carità⁹⁵ del Creatore, da cui allora sarà (resa) perfetta tutta la natura degli uomini e insieme degli angeli e (dei) demoni. Gli angeli sono in essa anche ora, compiutamente; gli uomini di tempo in tempo; i demoni nient'affatto, ma saranno (resi) perfetti (in essa) da ultimo per la grazia di Colui che li ha creati. Resta solo una tra tutte (le potenze) naturali dell'anima che, sola, rimane con essa nella separazione dal corpo, finché non accolga di nuovo il suo coniuge, al forte cenno del Creatore, ed è il motto dela vitalità. Quest'unica (potenza) resta preso di lei fin qui, e con essa (l'anima) cinge l'altro mondo. L'anima che ha peccato ed è

⁸⁹ ἡ ἁπλοῦς ῥαціонаλῆτις.

⁹⁰ ἡ σύνθετος ῥαціонаλῆτις.

⁹¹ ἡ ἁπλοῦς νοῦς.

⁹² ἡ ἁπλοῦς.

⁹³ ἡ ἁπλοῦς.

⁹⁴ ἡ ἁπλοῦς ἡ.

⁹⁵ ἡ ἁπλοῦς ἡ ἁπλοῦς.

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*stata giustificata con il corpo, non è giusto che riceva da sola
sofferenza e gioia*⁹⁶.

One can observe from the paragraph above that the bishop of Niniveh lists five cognitive powers just as patriarch Timothy does, and yet there are some differences. The vitality is common and is destined to a continuous work. From the first couple, the will disappears, and Isaac divides the rational power into two parts – simple and composed rationality with different duration. The first one continues its existence even after the death of the body, while the second ceases its existence in the moment the soul migrates from the body. This occurs as the latter one pertains to the knowledge of the created beings and become superfluous after death. The desire, considered as natural for the soul, goes beyond death, but irascibility, as after death there is no contradiction, is no longer necessary.

We identify here the synthesis Isaac makes between the noetic perspective (centred on the intellects/ nous) and the line so called “the school of feeling” (centred on the heart). The knowledge in the life to come is achieved by the simple rationality that is “the gnostic intellect”⁹⁷ during and by means of the divine vision⁹⁸ and stupor⁹⁹, respectively, by natural desire, in the pleasure of the divine charity¹⁰⁰.

In the same framework, Isaac speaks about five gifts that the human was given in order to be able to attend to the divine knowledge.

⁹⁶ Isaac of Niniveh (Isaac the Syrian), *The Second Part. Chapters IV-XLI* (II, for chapters IV-XLI), ed. by Sebastian Brock, Lovanii, In aedibus Peeters, CSCO 224-225, 1995, II, III, 3. 76-77; for I-II – S. Brock, “Two unpublished texts by St Isaac the Syrian”, *Sobornost/Eastern Churches Review*, 19 (1997), p. 7-33; for III – Isacco di Ninive, *Terza collezione*, edito da Sabino Chialà, Lovanii, In Aedibus Peeters, 2011, CSCO, 346-347; for the Italian translation see Isacco di Ninive, *Discorsi spirituali: capitoli sulla conoscenza, preghiera, contemplazione, sull'argomento della gehenna e altri opuscoli*, Qiqajon, Bose, 1990.

⁹⁷ ܠܕܢܥܡܐ ܠܡܥܡܐ.

⁹⁸ ܠܚܝܪܐܝܬܐ.

⁹⁹ ܠܡܡܕܐ.

¹⁰⁰ ܠܒܝ ܡܡܡܐ ܠܚܝܪܐܝܬܐ.

In the second collection, discourse 18, he lists them: life¹⁰¹, sense perception¹⁰², reason¹⁰³, free will¹⁰⁴ and authority¹⁰⁵, so that the human is able to enjoy “the delight of intelligence”¹⁰⁶ and “the pleasure of the gifts of insight”^{107,108}.

The very scope of the cognitive powers is clearly expressed by the bishop of Niniveh – to achieve the state of the angels, described following the two directions underlined above, that is “perfection of love”¹⁰⁹ and “passionless mind”¹¹⁰ – “excelling knowledge”¹¹¹, “a perfect state of knowledge”¹¹² and “insatiable love”^{113,114}.

In the discourse 52 of the first collection, Isaac highlights the uniqueness and unity of the gnoseological process and, at the same time, he evokes the changes or the continuous developments that it entails. There is one process that follows three progressive phases, according to the ascetical stages:

There are three stages (ከሥራና ሥራዊታዊ) in which knowledge ascends and descends in an intelligible way, and where it receives its variations according to variations of the places in which it moves... The three stages are: body, soul, spirit. And though knowledge is one in each nature, it becomes

¹⁰¹ ሥራዊታዊ.

¹⁰² ሥራዊታዊ ነገር.

¹⁰³ ሥራዊታዊ.

¹⁰⁴ ሥራዊታዊ.

¹⁰⁵ ሥራዊታዊ.

¹⁰⁶ ሥራዊታዊ ሥራዊታዊ.

¹⁰⁷ ሥራዊታዊ ሥራዊታዊ ሥራዊታዊ.

¹⁰⁸ II, 18, 18.

¹⁰⁹ ሥራዊታዊ ሥራዊታዊ.

¹¹⁰ ሥራዊታዊ ሥራዊታዊ.

¹¹¹ ሥራዊታዊ ሥራዊታዊ; see also KG IV, 43; John the Solitary, L.G. Rignell, *Briefe von Johannes dem Einsiedler*, Lund, 1941, p. 69.

¹¹² ሥራዊታዊ ሥራዊታዊ; KG III, 72; IV, 72; , L.G. Rignell, *Briefe von Johannes*, p. 62; Theodore of Mopsuestia, A. Mingana, *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on Nicene Creed*, 1932, p. 130.

¹¹³ ሥራዊታዊ ሥራዊታዊ.

¹¹⁴ II, XL, 4-5.

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*condensed or subtle in accordance with its abiding in this intelligible places...It is a gift presented by God unto the rational beings... it is simple in nature, not divided...but has variations and divisions in connection with its service*¹¹⁵.

One may understand from the quotation above that Isaac, when speaking about this process, refers to generally two types of knowledge – wordly (philosophical, natural, discursive, deductive, intellectual), contained in the first two ascetical stages, and spiritual (theological, supernatural, intuitive, inductive, experiential), correspondent to the third stage. In this frame, his work can be read in this key – the superiority of the spiritual to the wordly knowledge. If the former refers to the process of knowledge by research¹¹⁶, by virtue¹¹⁷, simple¹¹⁸, sensitive¹¹⁹ and, finally, is natural knowledge¹²⁰, the second, by contrast, refers to a knowledge out of faith¹²¹, by love¹²², supernatural¹²³, spiritual¹²⁴, and, ultimately, it is spiritual vision¹²⁵.

Next to the five powers evoked above, Isaac employs other four terms borrowed from the ascetical literature to describe the soul's mental and spiritual faculties, expression of the cognitive powers: ܠܥܡܐ, ܠܥܡܐܝܐ, ܠܥܡܐܝܐܝܐ, by which the human “knows”. The translation of these terms into modern languages created difficulties, for the terminology used is complex and sometimes flexible. Difficulties have begun in translating into Greek the first collection since the first two

¹¹⁵ *Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Niniveh translated from Bedjan's Syriac text with the introduction and registers by A.J. Wensinck* (I), Nieuwe reeks, Deel XXIII, 1, Wiesbaden, 1969, I, LI, pp. 248 (Mar Isaacus Ninivita, *De perfectione religiosa*/ B, Paris-Leipzig, 1909, p. 369).

¹¹⁶ I, LI, p. 242 (B, 360).

¹¹⁷ I, III, p. 21 (B, 30).

¹¹⁸ II, 3,2.77.

¹¹⁹ I, III, p. 21 (B, 31).

¹²⁰ I, LII, p. 253 (B, 378).

¹²¹ I, LI, p. 242 (B, 360).

¹²² I, III, p. 21 (B, 31).

¹²³ I, LII, p. 253 (B, 378).

¹²⁴ II, 3,2.77.

¹²⁵ I, III, p. 21 (B, 31).

Professor Sebastian Brock argues that there is enough fluidity in Isaac's technical speech, as the author did not want to picture a systematic guide on the inner life, but his works are directly related to the specific practical requests of the audience to which they are addressed. The Syriac scholar speaks about the interchangeability between some technical terms as ܠܡܢܐ (intellect), ܠܡܢܐ, ܠܡܢܐ (mind) and ܠܡܢܐ (heart)¹²⁶. The other translators, while acknowledging the difficulty of an accurate translation of these terms in a foreign language, sought to play each one with a specific term, comprehensive to contemporary language. Thus the first term (*hauna*) is generally rendered with “intellect”, the second (*mad'a*) with “mind”, the third one (*re'yana*) with “thinking/ reflection” and the last one (*tar'itha*) with “intelligence” or “conscience”^{127 128}.

¹²⁶ S. Brock, "Introduction", Isaac of Niniveh, *The Second Part*, p. XVII.

¹²⁸ See S. Brock in Isaac of Niniveh (Isaac the Syrian), *The Second Part*, p. XVII-XVIII ; A. Louf in Isaac le Syrien, *Œuvres complètes. 41 Discours récemment découvertes*, Spiritualité Orientale, 81, Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 2003, p. 77-87 ; A. Louf in Isaac le Syrien, *Œuvres spirituelles d'après un manuscrit récemment découvertes*, Spiritualité Orientale, 88, Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 2009, p. 25-35; S. Chialà, in Isacco di Ninive, *Terza collezione*, edito da Sabino Chialà, Lovanii, In Aedibus Peeters, 2011, CSCO, 346, p. XXVI-XXXIV.

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about the “knowledge of the Spirit” (ܐܘܝܢ ܡܠܟܐ)¹³⁰ and “the vision of the Spirit” (ܐܘܝܢ ܡܢܐܡܐ)¹³¹. Using an Old Testament imagery, he argues that the intellect is the place where human can see the spiritual realities, the mysteries of the Spirit (ܐܘܝܢ ܠܝܢܐ), and one is able to go beyond the Wall of the Holy of Holies, during “spiritual prayer” (ܠܝܬܝܢܐ ܠܠܐܠܗ). In the intellect one searches to grasp what is “God’s nature” (ܠܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ ܠܠܐܠܗ), that is his wisdom and the richness of his mysteries”¹³². The intellect is the ultimate forum determining the knowledge – according to the movement taking place in it one can determine the type of certain knowledge. Isaac speaks about the “distraction of intellect” (ܠܡܠܟܐ ܠܡܠܟܐ)¹³³, specific to the state of instruction and the “crucifixion of the intellect” (ܠܡܠܟܐ ܡܠܟܐ)¹³⁴, which refers to a spiritual knowledge, when human goes beyond the mundane and gazes at spiritual realities. He encloses within these two types of knowledge, three cognitive stages – against nature, natural/ according to nature (mundane knowledge), and a third stage supernatural (spiritual) knowledge: “one knowledge in these three degrees (natural, preternatural and supernatural). Within these is all movement of the mind (ܡܠܟܐ ܠܡܠܟܐ ܠܡܠܟܐ) that ascends or descends, moving in good things and between these”¹³⁵

¹³⁰ I: III, p. 30; XXXIV, p. 221; XLVII, p. 337; XLVIII, p. 445; LVII, p. 527; II: XVIII, 16; XXXIX, 18; III, 2. 75,85; III (Isacco di Ninive, *Terza collezione*, edito da Sabino Chialà, Lovanii, In Aedibus Peeters, 2011, CSCO, 346); IV, 21; VII,8; IX,18; see also “spiritual knowledge” (ܠܝܬܝܢܐ ܠܠܐܠܗ), I: XXXII, p. 217; XLIV, p. 318-320; LII, p. 377; LXVII, p. 473; LVI, p. 522; LVII, p. 525-527; II: III, 2,75, 77; III, 3,49; III, 4,17. See also at Evagrius, *Gnostikos* 47; *KG* II, 14,20; III,15; John the Solitary, *Dialogue on soul*, in S. Dederig, *Johannes von Lykopolis. Ein dialog über die seele un die Affekte des Menschen*, Liden, 1936, pp. 64-65; *Dialogues and Treaties with Thomasios*, W. Strothmann (ed.), *Johannes von Apamea. Sechs Gespräche Mit Thomasios. Der Briefwechsel Zwischen Thomasios und Johannes unde drei an Thomasios Gerichtete Abhandlungen. Syrischer Text*, II and XI, Berlin-New York, 1972 (PTS 11), p. 16,133.

¹³¹ III, IX,18.

¹³² III, 13,16.

¹³³ I, XXXIV, p. 151 (B, 223).

¹³⁴ I, XXXIV, p. 151 (B, 223).

¹³⁵ I, LI, p. 374 (B, 251).

Related to the intellect stands the second cognitive faculty, generally translated with “mind” – ܡܢܐ. Isaac defines it as “a spiritual sense (ܡܢܐ ܡܢܐ) which is made the recipient of the visual power (ܡܢܐ ܡܢܐ), as the pupil of the fleshly eyes into which perceptible light is poured”¹³⁶. Through intellect, the mind goes towards the divine Being and Cause of all. As the intellect, the mind is capable of an earthly, as well as a heavenly knowledge¹³⁷. For that one requires a discernment to perceive “what is natural and what comes from the body”¹³⁸, because the purpose raised by Incarnation is that of stepping in “the divine scales” (ܡܢܐ ܡܢܐ ܡܢܐ), which go beyond the earthly world. Even the eschatological state is closely connected to the state of the mind, as resurrection means “the renewal of the mind” (ܡܢܐ ܡܢܐ)¹³⁹, and those who have achieved it, by the exit of the mind beyond the world, rejoice in an ineffable communion with God¹⁴⁰.

The difference between the first two terms, united into the Greek νοῦς, and the third – is apparently obvious. In the 22nd discourse of the first collection, we read: “the intellect (ܡܢܐ), the governor of the senses, the daring spirit/ thinking (ܡܢܐ), that swift bird”¹⁴², or “those solitaries who have earnestly chosen to be free from the world in body and in spirit/ thinking (ܡܢܐ) in order to establish in their mind (ܡܢܐ) the prayer of solitude”¹⁴³. The same relation with the “mind” (ܡܢܐ) – the release of any worldly thoughts leads to purity of mind: “It makes the soul as if insane with joy, freeing it entirely in the mind’s (ܡܢܐ) flight to make it a sharer with that One who is above all, while nothing at all is mingled with the mind (ܡܢܐ)”¹⁴⁴.

¹³⁶ I, LXVII, p. 316 (B, 472).

¹³⁷ III, III, 18.

¹³⁸ III, III, 25.

¹³⁹ III, XI, 3; see also I, XXXV, p. 246; XLVI, p. 469; II, III, 4.54; III, XI, 1.

¹⁴⁰ III, VI, 48, 51.

¹⁴¹ Gr. διάνοια.

¹⁴² I, XXII, p. 112 (B, 165).

¹⁴³ I, XVIII, p. 100 (B, 148).

¹⁴⁴ III, I, 13.

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We understand that the power of “thought/ thinking” is mobile, changeable, by the means of thoughts, either to the world or to those heavenly. Isaac asserts that, in the first case, thinking “wanders”¹⁴⁵ through carnal and worldly thoughts. From this perspective, the spiritual warfare involves an escape from the mundane, at the level of thinking, by Scripture reading¹⁴⁶, meditation on God’s laws¹⁴⁷, pure prayer¹⁴⁸ and, in general, any ascetic work that will lead to “the unification of thinking”¹⁴⁹ or, more suggestive, “unique/unified thinking” (ܐܝܠܐ ܕܝܬܐ) ¹⁵⁰, fixing the thought in God¹⁵¹.

The fourth cognitive faculty closely related to the previous one is ܐܝܠܐ (intelligence)¹⁵². It might be interpreted into two ways: either supposed to mean what is going on within the thought or the appearance of one’s thoughts (mentality) or a type of “reservoir” of these thoughts¹⁵³, usually translated with “intelligence/ thinking/ or conscience”. Isaac argues that: “Purity of soul is freedom from the secret passions concentrated in one’s thinking (ܐܝܠܐ) ”¹⁵⁴. He speaks about “carnal intelligence” (ܐܝܠܐ ܕܥܡܐ) ¹⁵⁵ or “childish intelligence” (ܐܝܠܐ ܕܝܬܐ) ¹⁵⁶ that need to be cleansed by reading the Scripture (ܐܝܠܐ), meditation (ܐܝܠܐ ܕܝܬܐ), prayer (ܐܝܠܐ ܕܝܬܐ) ¹⁵⁷ and the remembrance of God (ܐܝܠܐ ܕܝܬܐ) ¹⁵⁸ within himself. The tripartite evolution inherited

¹⁴⁵ II, III,4.42.

¹⁴⁶ II, III,2.60.

¹⁴⁷ II, III,3.11.

¹⁴⁸ II, III,3.42.

¹⁴⁹ II, III,4.34.

¹⁵⁰ II, III,4.53.

¹⁵¹ III, IV,6.

¹⁵² Gr. φρόνημα.

¹⁵³ Cf. *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, p. cviii-cvii.

¹⁵⁴ In Wensinck: “Psychic purity is to be free from hidden affections in the spirit”/ I, XL, p. 204 (B, 306).

¹⁵⁵ II, III, 2.25.

¹⁵⁶ III, IV,9; See also I, LI, p. 361; II, XXIV, 5; II, XXXIX, 17; Similar expressions: ܐܝܠܐ ܕܝܬܐ (ܐܝܠܐ ܕܝܬܐ ܕܝܬܐ): LXXVI, p. 527, 529; II, XXXIX, 2; with ܐܝܠܐ : II, XIV,39; XXXIX,14, III,4; with ܐܝܠܐ: II,VIII,9.

¹⁵⁷ II, III,1.63.

¹⁵⁸ III, VIII,1.

from John the Solitary is visible, as Isaac speaks about the “carnal intelligence” (ܐܝܢܬܠܝܬܐ), “psychical intelligence” (of the soul – ܐܝܢܬܠܝܬܐ) and “spiritual intelligence” (ܐܝܢܬܠܝܬܐ)¹⁵⁹.

I will evoke a last passage where one may find all four noetic faculties together, trying to identify the connections between them and the differences that individualize them in the process of knowledge: “For the (vigil) is the light of the intelligence (ܐܝܢܬܠܝܬܐ). By it, the mind (ܠܡܢܐ) is elevated and the thought (ܬܠܡܢܐ) concentrated, the intellect (ܠܡܢܐ) flies (on high) and gazes at spiritual things and becomes young and illuminated in prayer”¹⁶⁰. This passage seems to clearly identify the role of each noetic faculty in the process of knowledge. Starting in reverse order of the analysis that I have done up to now, I will underline that in Isaac’s vision, through clear “intelligence” (ܐܝܢܬܠܝܬܐ), generated by the vigil and, generally, by the ascetic endeavour, the “thought” (ܬܠܡܢܐ) becomes unified, “the mind/understanding” (ܠܡܢܐ) rises up and the “intellect” (ܠܡܢܐ) shines, rejuvenates and stretches toward the spiritual things.

Another spiritual faculty, particularly important in Isaac mystical system, is the heart (ܠܒ)¹⁶¹. The bishop of Niniveh defines it as the spiritual centre of the human that embraces and encompasses all other faculties in the field of spiritual knowledge. This is clearly expressed by Isaac when comparing it with “the thought”: “The thought (ܬܠܡܢܐ) is one of the senses of the soul. The heart (ܠܒ) is the central organ of the inner senses¹⁶², because it is the root”¹⁶³. He goes further and argues that the heart represents the boundary between the senses of the body and those of the soul, ruling both of them. It is “in the middle between psychical¹⁶⁴ and bodily¹⁶⁵ apperceptions; to the former it belongs

¹⁵⁹ II, III, 3.51.

¹⁶⁰ I, LXXX, p. 375 (B, 560).

¹⁶¹ On the role of the heart in spiritual life see Antoine Guillaumont, „Les sens des noms du cœur dans l’antiquité”, in *Le cœur (Etudes carmélitaines)*, Paris, 1950, p. 41-81.

¹⁶² ܬܠܡܢܐ ܐܝܢܬܠܝܬܐ.

¹⁶³ I, III, p. 20 (B, 29).

¹⁶⁴ Literally – of the soul: ܐܝܢܬܠܝܬܐ.

organically¹⁶⁶, to the latter naturally¹⁶⁷. And the recipient directs its taste of its actions towards both sides”¹⁶⁸. It starts the path with the purification of the passions and bodily thoughts¹⁶⁹, but achieves its perfection by the means of God’s grace, in the spiritual stage¹⁷⁰, when it becomes the altar (ܐܠܬܐ) of God¹⁷¹. The remembrance of the Resurrection and Judgement and the future life¹⁷² occurs in the heart and there one is able to experience some apperceptions of the knowledge of the future order¹⁷³.

Forms of divine apperception

All these powers and faculties, as argued above, aim in Isaac’s mystic theology, to what he calls “knowledge”, “feeling” and “divine vision”. In the last part of my paper I will try to shortly define these three forms of spiritual life, and explain how the cognitive powers participate in this process.

On the concept of “knowledge” (ܐܠܡܐ) I have already dwelt at the very beginning of my paper. I will only give a short paragraph where Isaac defines this process in an eschatological frame: “What is knowledge (ܐܠܡܐ)? The apperception (ܐܝܬܐܝܬܐ) of immortal life. What is immortal life? Apperception (ܐܝܬܐܝܬܐ) in God. Knowledge concerning God is the highest of all desirable things”¹⁷⁴.

The term “theoria” (ܬܝܘܪܝܐ) or “divine vision” is inherited from the Byzantine Mystics (θεωρία) simply transliterated into Syriac language. Isaac borrows this term from the mystical language of

¹⁶⁵ Of the body – ܐܬܐܝܬܐ.

¹⁶⁶ ܐܬܐܝܬܐ.

¹⁶⁷ ܐܬܐܝܬܐ.

¹⁶⁸ I, XXXIII, p. 148 (B, 219).

¹⁶⁹ I, I, p. 4-5 (B, 5-6).

¹⁷⁰ II, 3,4,15.

¹⁷¹ I, XXII, p. 113 (B, 167); III, 14,5.

¹⁷² I, LXV, p. 297 (B, 443).

¹⁷³ I, LXV, p. 304 (B, 454).

¹⁷⁴ I, p. 289 (Bedjan 431).

Evagrius and Dionysius¹⁷⁵, since Syriac writers do not normally employ it¹⁷⁶. He explains to his readers terms such as “vision of the spirit” (ܘܥܝܢ ܪܫܝܐ)¹⁷⁷, or “non apperceptible mental¹⁷⁸ revelation” (ܪܥܝܢܐ ܕܠܥܝܢܐ ܕܠܥܝܢܐ)¹⁷⁹, “apprehension of the divine mysteries (ܪܥܝܢܐ ܕܡܝܫܬܐ ܕܥܠܝܐ) which are hidden in the things spoken”¹⁸⁰. In this state the intellect becomes naked and the mind rises above the worldly things and experiences the vision of the immaterial reality, running without senses. The bishop of Niniveh calls this state “unitary knowledge”. If bodily conduct (ܪܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܡܝܐ) purifies the body from material elements¹⁸¹, mental discipline (ܪܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ) purifies the soul from material impulses¹⁸² and changes their affectible nature into motions of contemplation (ܪܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ). And this

will bring the soul near to the nakedness of the mind (ܪܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ) that is called immaterial contemplation (ܪܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ); this is spiritual discipline (ܪܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ). It elevates the intellect (ܥܝܢܐ) above earthly things and brings it near to the primordial spiritual contemplation (ܘܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ); it directs the intellect (ܥܝܢܐ) towards God by the sight (ܪܥܝܢܐ) of unspeakable glory and it delights spiritually in the hope of future things... Spiritual discipline is service without the senses...when the mind of saints was given with personal contemplation

¹⁷⁵ See S. Brock, “Discerning the Evagrian in the writings of Isaac of Niniveh: a preliminary investigation”, *Adamantius*, 15 (2009), pp. 62-63, 66-67; Idem, “Some Uses of the Term *theoria* in the Writings of Isaac of Niniveh”, *Parole de l’Orient*, 20 (1995-6), p. 407-419.

¹⁷⁶ Professor Sebastian Brock argues that this term only appears at those authors who have known and used Syriac writings of Evagrius, from John the Solitary onwards (S. Brock, „Some Uses of the Term „theoria”, p. 407-408).

¹⁷⁷ “spiritual sight” (Wensinck); I, XXXV, p. 175 (B, 260).

¹⁷⁸ Literally – “of the intellect”.

¹⁷⁹ I, XX, p. 109 (B, 161).

¹⁸⁰ I, II, p. 12 (B, 17).

¹⁸¹ By bodily labours, personal work.

¹⁸² It is the work of the heart, the incessantly meditation on the judgment and providence, incessant prayer of heart and the domain of inner affections.

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(ܠܥܡܠܐܡܬܐ ܠܝܐܢܐܠܐ)¹⁸³ and further sight (ܠܐܝܢܐ) will be spiritual (ܠܥܡܠܐܡܬܐ) sight... from there one easily is moved onwards toward what is called solitary knowledge (ܠܥܡܠܐܡܬܐ ܠܥܡܠܐܡܬܐ), which is ecstasy (ܠܝܡܐܠܐ) in God; this is the order of that high future state that will be given... after resurrection¹⁸⁴.

From the text above, one can mention some general observations around the concept. Firstly, “theoria” refers to the spiritual conduct, when both intellect and mind are purified and above earthly things. Isaac joins the attribute “immaterial”, as referring to the noetic faculties as well as to the absence of any material thoughts. Successively, he underlines that “theoria” is achieved in the Spirit, indicating the source, and adds the attribute “primordial”, which probably refers to an originary state¹⁸⁵. This spiritual theoria means partaking God’s ineffable glory¹⁸⁶ and the spiritual delights, as anticipation of life after resurrection.

Isaac of Niniveh suggests a gnoseological itinerary that involves a full participation of the human as subject in this process. Therefore, he involves the sensitive-spiritual power as well, that is the heart, as argued above. He renders this form of knowledge with ܠܥܡܠܐܡܬܐ ܝܒܐ, “feeling”, “perception”. Sabino Chialà includes this form of knowledge in the spectrum “knowledge – experience” and claims that it relates to real and practical knowledge. Therefore he opts for the modern term “perception”¹⁸⁷. This form of knowledge does not refer to bodily or psychic senses, but to spiritual cognitive ones. First, the “feeling” that generates “spiritual prayer” is beyond the knowledge of created beings

¹⁸³ Concerning the primordial creation of nature.

¹⁸⁴ I, L, p. 202-203 (B, 303-304).

¹⁸⁵ Despite the fact Isaac does not support the idea of perfection in Paradise.

¹⁸⁶ Salient theme of the theological contemporary dispute.

¹⁸⁷ “Percezione”; Sabino Chialà, „Introduzione”, Isacco di Ninive, *Terza collezione*, p. XXVII; André Louf enlarges the spectrum of this term and argues that it describes an experience of sensorial, mental, intellectual or spiritual nature. And yet, because the root of the term refers directly to a specific sensorial experience, he opts for the term “feeling. (“Ressentir”, André Louf, „Introduction”, Isaac le syrien, *Oeuvres spirituelles II*, p. 86).

(ᲛᲗᲗᲗ ᲛᲗᲗᲗ)¹⁸⁸, as occurring when grace dwells in thinking (ᲛᲗᲗᲗ)¹⁸⁹. It is the experience of God's Kingdom¹⁹⁰, “the feeling (ᲛᲗᲗᲗ ᲛᲗᲗᲗ) of what is in God... as is stupor (ᲛᲗᲗᲗ), in the fullness of God's love¹⁹¹”, referring to what pertains to his nature (ᲛᲗᲗᲗ)¹⁹².

I will give a last fragment, which, in a very clear way, points out that this process is not limited to intellectual activity, but rational power is swallowed up by the sweetness of feeling:

By knowledge I do not intend a rational motion or what is of the cognitive part¹⁹³, but that perception (ᲛᲗᲗᲗ ᲛᲗᲗᲗ) which assuages the rational power¹⁹⁴ with a certain pleasure of wonder and it brings to the sweetness of stillness, ‘away’ from the course of all thought... This is the taste of the future perfection¹⁹⁵ mystically foretold in this life, and also in a mystic way about the joy which is the taste of the pledge of the Kingdom¹⁹⁶.

Conclusion

Finally, I will draw two short conclusions. From the paper above, one could easily observe there is an evolution of the terminology referring to the cognitive powers, depending on the sources. The list, as it appears with different authors, reflects a more Aristotelian or more Platonic pattern read within the local anthropological tradition.

Referring to Isaac, he makes a personal reading of the perspective inherited from the tradition of his time. But what is more

¹⁸⁸ III, XVI,3.

¹⁸⁹ III, XIII,24.

¹⁹⁰ III, III,18.

¹⁹¹ ᲛᲗᲗᲗ ᲛᲗᲗᲗᲗ III, IV,1, 5-6; II, LXII, p. 430.

¹⁹² III, IV,1,7; XI,2; XIII, 15; II, XV, 11; II, III, 4.48.

¹⁹³ ᲛᲗᲗᲗ ᲛᲗᲗᲗᲗᲗᲗᲗ.

¹⁹⁴ ᲛᲗᲗᲗᲗᲗᲗ ᲛᲗᲗᲗ.

¹⁹⁵ (ᲛᲗᲗᲗ ᲛᲗᲗᲗᲗᲗᲗ) I, LI, p. 367; II, III, IV,34; III, III,10-11; III, XIII,17.

¹⁹⁶ See the two stages: of the right and the perfect people; ᲛᲗᲗᲗᲗ ᲛᲗᲗᲗᲗ (I, III, p. 31; I, XII, p. 121,123; II, III,1.67; II, III, 3.48; III, II,7; III, XIII, 13,17).

important, the technical terminology that he uses is only secondary. He does not want to create an anthropological-philosophical system, but more to express a personal cognitive experience, capable of being communicated to his readers.

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